



A short programme to support the practice of mindfulness



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An introduction to mindfulness

Mindfulness can be one of those words that sounds...daunting... tricky... catch all... something that might be useful...but you're just not sure how.

What this resource should do, is unpack a little about what this '**mindfulness**' word means and explore how '**being mindful**' is something that can benefit ourselves and the young people who come to our group week in and week out.

This resource will also provide you with activities for you to use to try and practice being mindful and demonstrate how these exercises can work to improve health, state of mind in how we think about and view ourselves, as well as show how mindfulness links to Scouting Ireland SPICES.

Mindfulness in simple terms: To '**be mindful**' means to be **alert, aware** and **focused** moment to moment about the **thoughts, feelings** and **sensations** we are experiencing whilst '**being in that moment**'.

Being still and in the moment is often something that is easier said than done. Being mindful means that we are focused on everything happening in the present. We are **NOT** rehashing the past or thinking about the future, but are solely focused on the **here and now**, accepting how we feel in that moment.

When being mindful, there is no right or wrong way to feel or respond to what we are experiencing. Mindfulness is an exercise in meeting ourselves and feeling a connection to the moment and place we find ourselves in.

7 Principles of mindfulness

1. **Non-judging:** our thoughts are not right or wrong, we remain impartial in our own experiences.
2. **Patience:** we can wait for our feelings to come and not hurry our thoughts and emotions.
3. **Remaining open:** we are curious and receptive to new experiences.
4. **Trust:** we trust our own thoughts and feelings.
5. **Non-Striving:** you are being, not doing.
6. **Acceptance:** see things as they are.
7. **Letting Go:** inhibitions are released.



But why mindfulness?

What are the benefits?

Mindfulness as a movement or 'a tool' to help support mental health, is something that is not new. With roots based in Buddhism, the exercise of stopping and being still to feel and experience the world around us has always been at the centre of Buddhist philosophy. Through focusing on sensations, emotions, feelings and thoughts, the practice of mindfulness has shown that it:

Improves well-being: mindfulness supports many attitudes that contribute to a satisfied life. Being mindful makes it easier to savour the pleasures in life as they occur, helps us become fully engaged in activities, and creates a greater capacity to deal with adverse events.

Through focusing on the here and now, we are less likely to get caught up in worries about the future or regrets over the past, are less preoccupied with what concerns us and helps us to better connect with others.

Improves physical health: scientific studies have discovered that mindfulness techniques help improve physical health in a number of ways. It can: help relieve stress, treat heart disease, lower blood pressure, reduce chronic pain, improve sleep, and alleviate gastrointestinal difficulties.

Improves mental health: mindfulness techniques have been used as an important element in the treatment of a number of problems, including: depression, substance abuse, eating disorders, conflicts, anxiety disorders, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Scouting and mindfulness

To stop and take notice of the world around us, identify our place within it and recognise the influence and impact that is held on one another has been a cornerstone and main principle of the methods and approaches used in Scouting.

Mindfulness activities enable us to explore these links further as well as promote and encourage positive mental health amongst all members in our groups. By encouraging members to stop, feel the world around them, recognising the links we have to it, and to learn how to quiet down and recognise our emotions and challenge negatives that may surround us; we are empowering young people to attend to themselves in a positive way.

Aside from the links with the Emotional & Spiritual elements of SPICES Scouting Ireland promotes mindfulness practice as part of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** as promoted by the UN and can act toward completion of the **Chief Scouting Awards**.



Mindfulness - Programme Purpose

This short programme has been designed to be run as either a standalone programme that introduces groups to the basic ideas and techniques involved in being mindful, or as part of a wider programme you may wish to develop in relation to the bigger picture of Mental Health and Well-Being.

In that respect, and the links to mental health, being mindful (as recognised by the **NHS**) allows us to become **"more aware of the stream of thoughts and feelings that we experience, and to see how we can become entangled in that stream in ways that are not helpful."**

Being mindful allow us **"to stand back from our thoughts and start to see their patterns. Gradually, we can train ourselves to notice when our thoughts are taking over and realise that thoughts are simply 'mental events' that do not have to control us...Awareness of this kind also helps us notice signs of stress or anxiety earlier and helps us deal with them better"** over all improving our mental health and general well-being.

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/tips-and-support/mindfulness/>

In respect of **SPICES**, these activities directly link to developing the **Emotional** elements of ourselves through encouraging young people to be confident, have security and to be aware of and able to express emotions, learning to understand and accept them for the individual and in others.

In terms of **Spiritual**, these exercises serve to enable young people to have an acceptance and understanding of who they are, to connect on a deeper level with the world around them and to place value on themselves and in the relationships we have with others, accepting all things equally.

Links to Safe Guarding

Encouraging young people to be able to develop their understanding of the self, how to recognise, control and respond to their emotions, develop resilience and an ability to adapt to what experiences surrounds them are all key outcomes associated with 'mindful practice' techniques.

As facilitators we must remain aware and vigilant to what these processes can open up or bring out for those we are working with and as such we must ensure that we create a safe and trusting environment that enables those taking part to do so in a free and trusting way.

Ensure that you are aware and up to date regard all Child Protection and Safe Guarding policy and guidance and ensure that the group with who you are working with know who it is they can turn to and discuss any issues that could arise from taking part in these exercises.

As this Mindfulness programme has been designed to compliment and attend to the overall mental health of young people please ensure that you take the time to listen to any concerns raised by young people, take appropriate steps to deal with any concerns around 'disclosure' and always provide 'sign-posting' opportunities to the group if they feel they need to follow up on anything raised.

Mindfulness - Programme Delivery

Plan

Firstly read through this programme resource and familiarise yourself with the definitions, activities and resources used in programme delivery

With your group, introduce the topic of 'looking after ourselves' and mental health. Explain that 'mindfulness' is a way of helping us view the world, our experiences and our emotions in a controlled and calm way.

Encourage a 'buy in' for the programme through explaining the benefits mindfulness brings, including how it links to broader Scouting outcomes and agree with the group when and how the programme will be run.



Do

To deliver the programme ensure that you have appropriate resources and support to do so and that you are confident in delivering the activities as directed in this programme resource.

Ensure you are completing delivery of activities in an appropriate setting, a clear and silent space and that the group is focused and in the correct 'frame of mind' to engage. Completing a '**check-in**', before you begin, asking the participants how they are, how ready for the activity they feel and what their expectations are may help you gauge how they may respond.

The programme is split into four areas, to achieve the badge, participants must complete and show learning and knowledge in each area through completing the activities and sharing what it is they are 'taking away' from each session through completion of a '**check-out**'.

Week 1 - Introducing Mindfulness

- Spidey Sense
- All a Jumble
- Mindful Breathing

Week 2 - Next Steps - Art

- Mazes
- Mazes - Group Activity

Week 3 - Next Steps - Art

- Mandela
- Origami

Week 4 - Stepping Up

- Body Scan
- 5 Minutes of Gratitude

Week 5 - Stepping Up

- Heartbeat
- Mix Tape
- Plan for 'A walk' activity

Week 6 - Concluding the Journey

- 'A walk to meet yourself'
- Inclusive of activity/ programme feedback.

Review

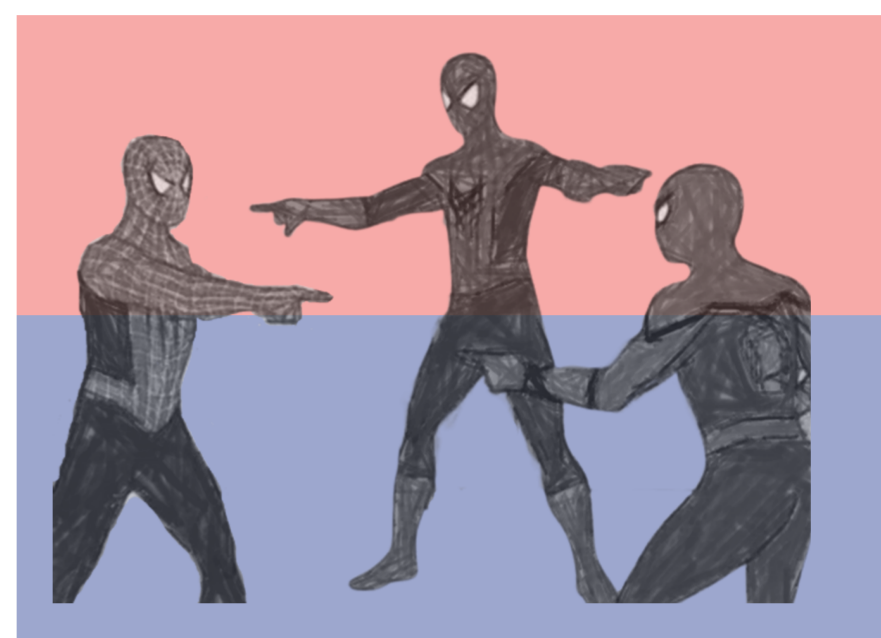
- **As good practice**, you should complete a '**base-line**' activity, asking participants to rate their understanding of 'mindfulness' at the beginning of the programme and one at the end- this can be completed using whichever method you feel works best.
- As a facilitator you should complete a **short log**, recording the numbers in attendance and provide a brief description of how the activity impacted the young people, recording their thoughts and opinions.
- Finally, taking **pictures** or **videos** is also recommended so you can reflect on and share the experience. Please ensure all consent for capturing images has been signed and filed.

Introducing mindfulness

Introduction Activity

'Spidey Sense'

As a way of introducing the concept of mindfulness to your group, regardless of their age, using the idea that just like Spiderman or Spider-Woman having a '**heightened**' ability to feel and sense the world around them is a great way to exemplify what it means to stop, feel and think about the sensations we feel in the world around us by being mindful.



To run this activity you will need: a scented candle, a recording on your phone or speaker of white noise and some brightly coloured card or fabric (enough pieces for the group)

- Step 1:** Using a quiet space, form a circle with your group ensuring everyone has a clear space around them.
- Step 2:** 'Spidey sense' - using the concept for how our Spider hero's are able to tap in to the world around them, explain that we too are going to use our 'Spidey senses'. Ask everyone to be still, close their eyes and ask them to try and 'switch off their brains' - quiet their thoughts.
- Step 3:** Ask everyone to focus on one thing, be it a smell, a sound or something they are 'feeling' from within them. After 2 minutes ask for some feedback from individuals around anything they noticed.
- Step 4:** To demonstrate a little more how we can focus on our senses or feelings, ask the group to again close their eyes and quiet their thoughts. This time ask everyone to slow their breathing and inhale through their nose. Walk the scented candle around the circle, allowing the group to notice and focus on the smell.
- Step 5:** Repeat the exercise using the 'white noise' sound, encouraging the group to be still and to concentrate on what feelings and emotions the sound evoke.
- Step 6:** Placing the coloured card or fabric in the middle of the circle. ask the group to focus on one colour only and to think about what that colour conjures or brings forward in their thoughts and how this make them feel.

Debrief: Explore with the group how they felt about the activity:

- Where they able to remain still and concentrate and be aware of what they were noticing?
- Did introducing the smells, noise and colours help them focus?
- Do they feel anymore relaxed in themselves?

Explain to the group how the idea of 'being mindful' is just like the activity they have completed, it is about tapping into our 'Spidey senses' and noticing how the things around us make us feel and affect how we are.

Introducing mindfulness

Introduction Activity

'All a Jumble'

A very quick and easy game to exemplify how our thoughts and feelings can cause us to miss focusing on what we should be focusing on, and how when our emotions are jumbled we can sometimes make decisions or do things that aren't always the best choice.



To run this activity all you need is some space, no less than 6 participants and some ribbon or sisal and a whistle.

For older groups you could use this activity as a quick energiser with explanation given at the end.

Step 1: Select one group member to be the 'runner'. Their challenge will be to get from one end of the 'play area' to the other, without touching any of the other participants or their ribbon/ sisal.

Step 2: Having set the boundaries for the 'play area', the other group members will be asked to move across the area, twirling their ribbon/ sisal and generally trying to block and tag the player. Any time the player is 'tagged' they must go back to the starting position.

Step 3: Encourage those trying to stop the player to be high energy, frantic and un-predictable in their movements, making it as difficult as possible for the player.

Step 4: After a number of attempts, run the course one more time, except that this time when you blow the whistle, everyone except the player stops moving- allowing the player to pass through un-impeded.

Debrief: Explain that the game is supposed to represent how busy our minds are, those running around are our thoughts and feelings, our emotions etc. when we are stressed, upset or anxious about something. When we are in this state it is hard to focus and see clearly the things we should do and decisions we should make because we aren't thinking clearly.

Now explain that when we stop, practice techniques to calm ourselves and focus, we can make better decisions or think about thing in a different, clearer way, as exemplified when the whistle blew- this is what being mindful allows us to do.

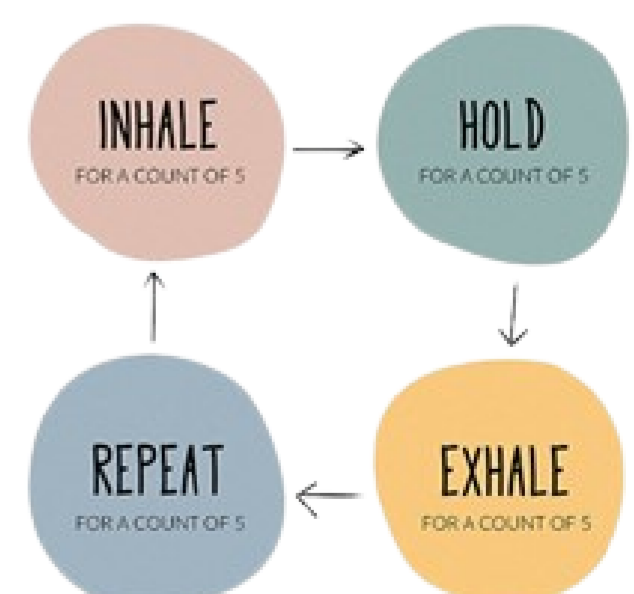
Introduction Activity

'Breath in/ Breath out'

As simple as it sounds, learning how to control our breathing in terms of being mindful is not always an easy thing to do. Take time before, during and after activities to encourage participants to stop, be still and to control their breathing. A good rule of thumb is to inhale through the nose and hold the breath for 5 seconds, exhale through the mouth and repeat.

Ask participants to really focus on the action of breathing and to identify what sensations and feelings, breathing like this brings up.

MINDFUL BREATHING



Practicing Mindfulness-Next Steps

Next Step Activity- Art

'Mazes'

Having an activity that encourages us to focus on what we are doing is another great way of demonstrating 'mindfulness techniques'.

Drawing is an activity that naturally allows us to 'switch off' and place our concentration into one place.

Creating a 'mindful' maze is one way of demonstrating this.



To run this activity all you need (initially) A4 or A3 paper, pens, pencils, crayons. For delivering the group project, larger pieces of paper or canvas or white paper table cloth, paints, markers or any other crafting material.

Step 1: Give participants a few blank pages and pen/ pencil/ crayons, explain that the idea is to create a maze- a meandering path, usually following a circular or spiral direction, with a single path that leads to the centre.

Step 2: Provide examples if necessary, then ask everyone to quiet down their thoughts, focus on the blank space and let their pen/ pencil etc do the work, and create a number of mazes.

Step 3: Once complete, ask participants to keep a maze for themselves and then pass another to the left for someone else to complete. This exercise should be done in silence with everyone encouraged to focus on the activity.

Debrief: Ask participants what they experienced completing the activity, where they able to remain focused at all times? Did the activity make them concentrate on just one thing or lots? Do the colours and shapes they used have any meaning? Was the experience relaxing?

Next Step: Ask the group to work on creating a much larger maze to be hung on the wall. The purpose of this maze will be to act as a focal point for others to use to help them to take a pause and focus their minds, helping create a calm space that allows us to take a moment away from our thoughts.

Focus on colours and shapes and the materials that may be used and don't forget to reflect and make affirmations for the tasks and roles completed by the group.

Next Step Activity- Art

'Mandala Colouring'

Creativity and drawing are recognised as pathways and tools to follow and use when exercising 'mindfulness'. Research has shown that drawing or colouring Mandala's have aided in reducing anxiety more than free form drawing or drawing irregular shapes.

You can find an array of Mandala templates online, these with crayons or colouring pencils form to create an easy activity for you to use across any of your programme delivery as a way to calm and focus those you are working with.



Practicing Mindfulness-Next Steps

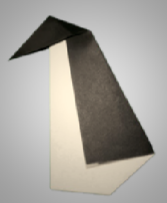
Next Step Activity- Art

Simple Origami

Origami has been proven to provide both mental and physical stimulus with exercise. Use of the hands stimulates areas of the brain, improving short-term memory. It offers a calming and relaxing effect by following a simple step-by-step process, which can be repeated and taught again and again, until success is achieved.

What follows are three simple to follow sets of instructions for a range of origami constructions. You can find other origami ideas and guides at the following website:

<https://www.origamiway.com/easy-origami.shtml>



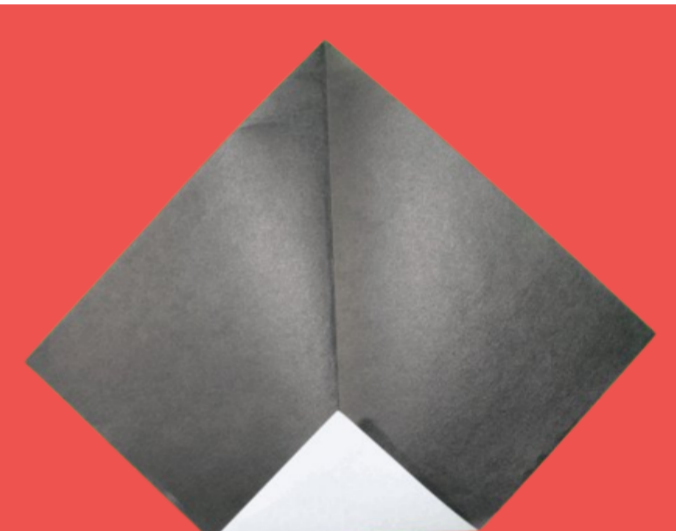
Art- Origami Penguin



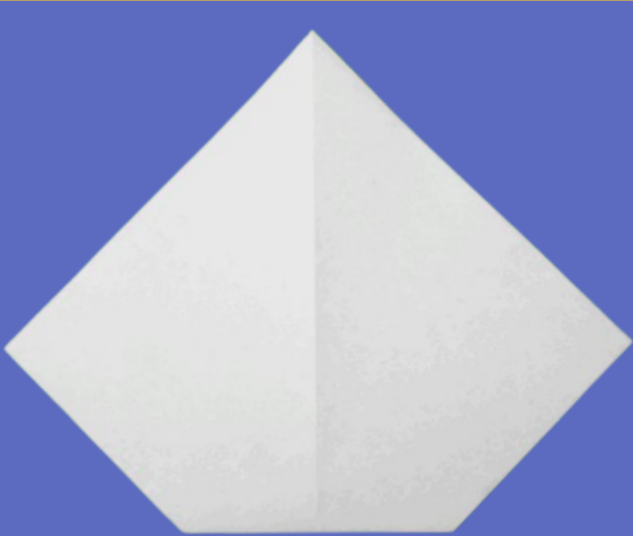
Step 1: Start with a square piece of origami paper.



Step 2: Let's create a crease in the centre to use as a guideline. Fold the paper in half, then unfold.



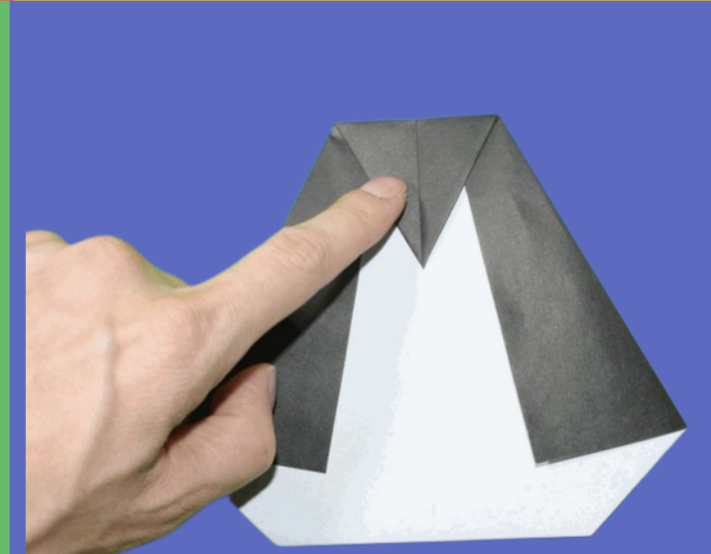
Step 3: Fold the bottom corner up like this.



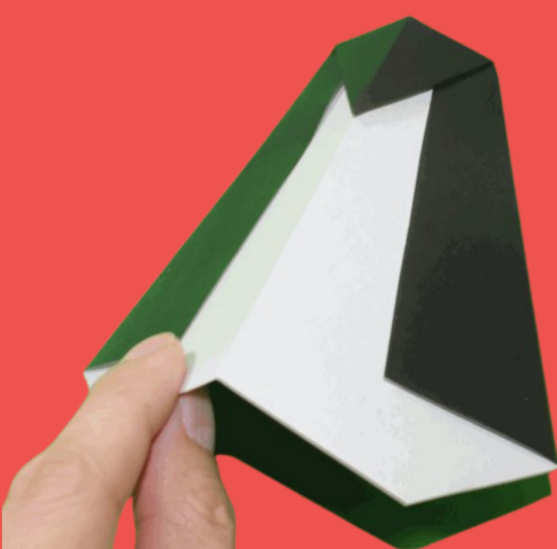
Step 4: Turn the paper over.



Step 5: Fold in the left and right sides like this.



Step 6: Fold the top point down like this. This will be the head.



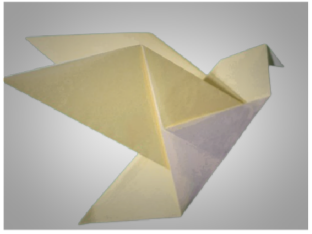
Step 7: Fold the penguin in half by raising the centre crease up and folding the sides back. This is called a mountain fold.





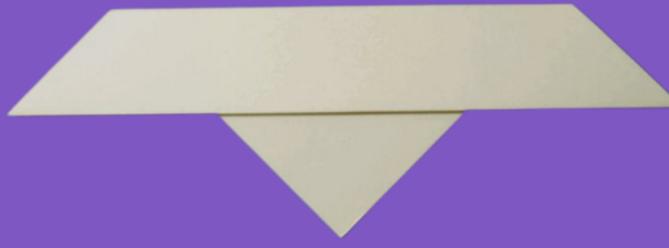


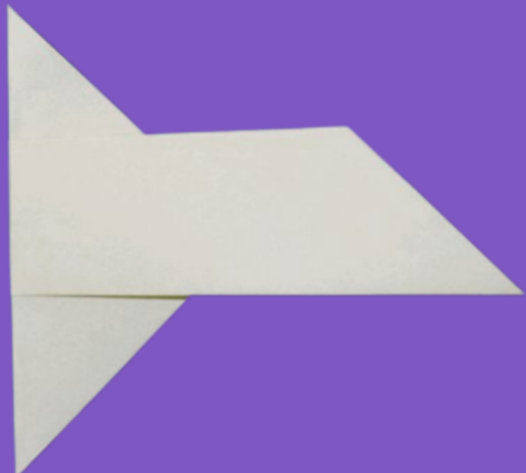
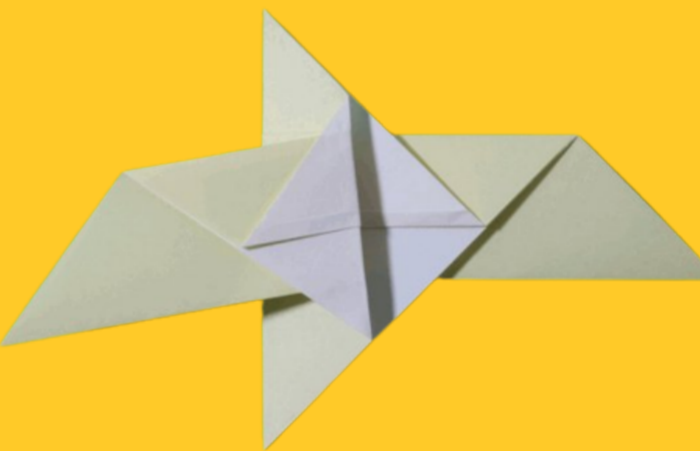


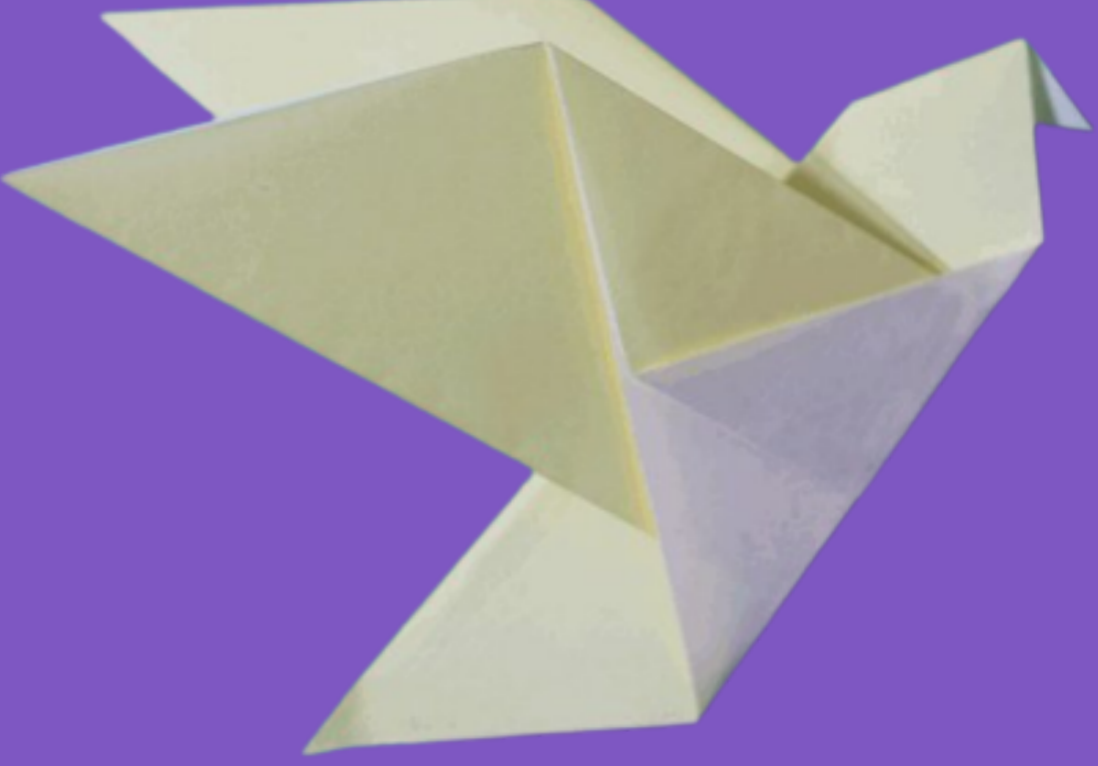
Step 8: Pull the beak out and flatten the back of the head like this.



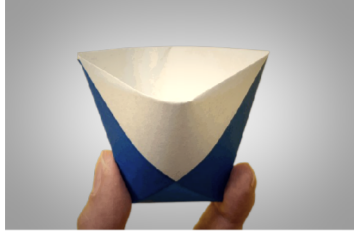
Practicing Mindfulness-Next Steps



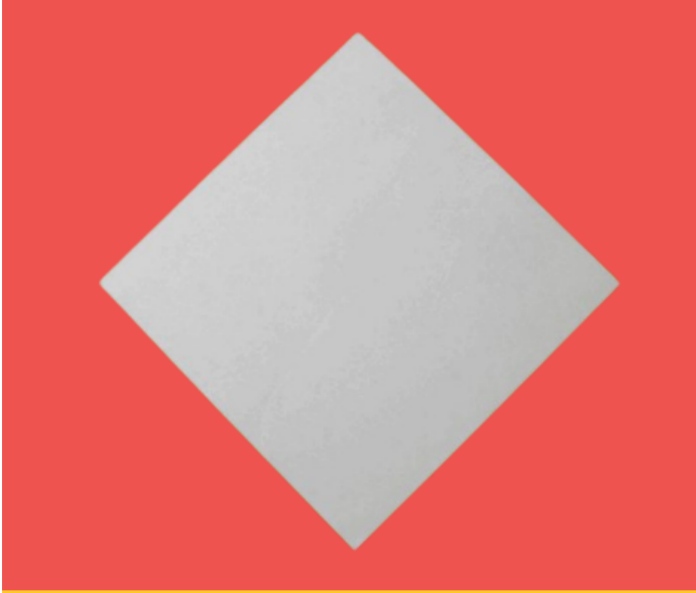

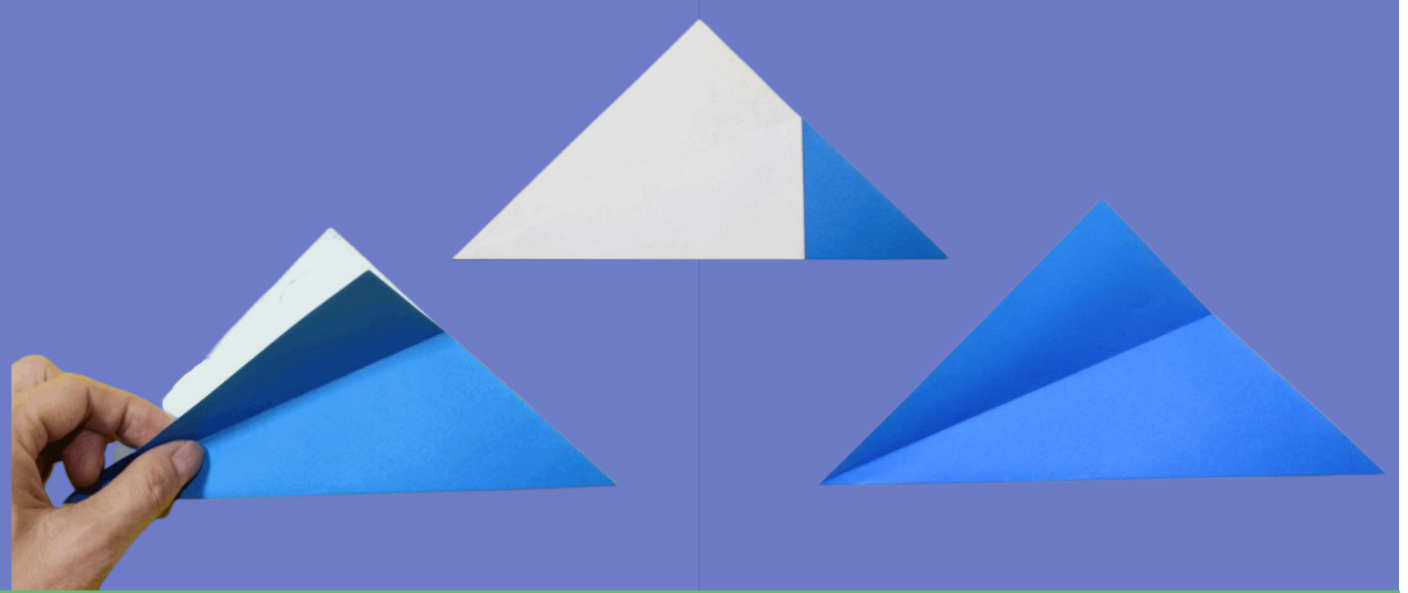
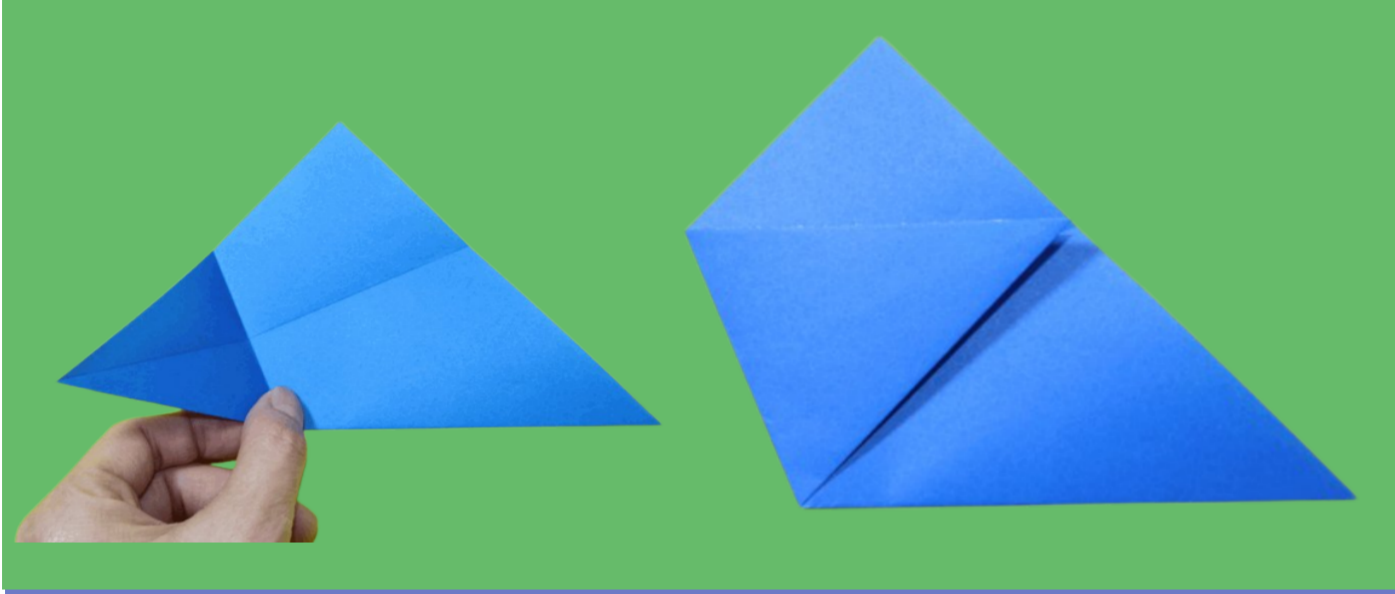


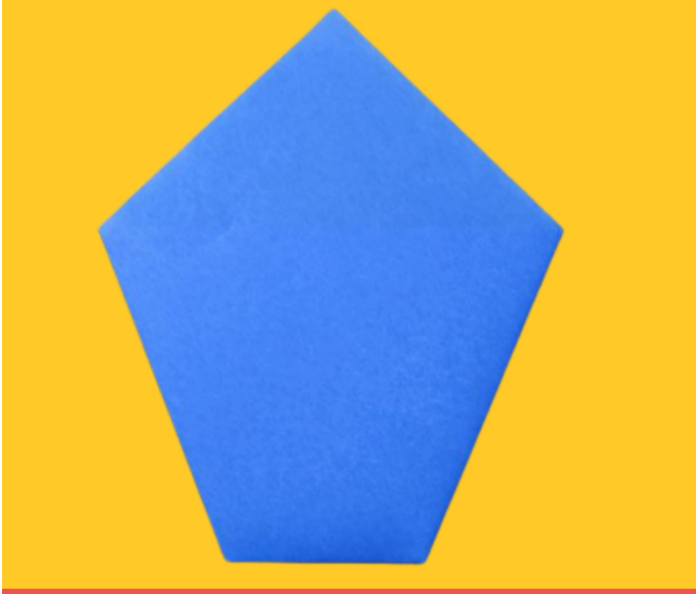

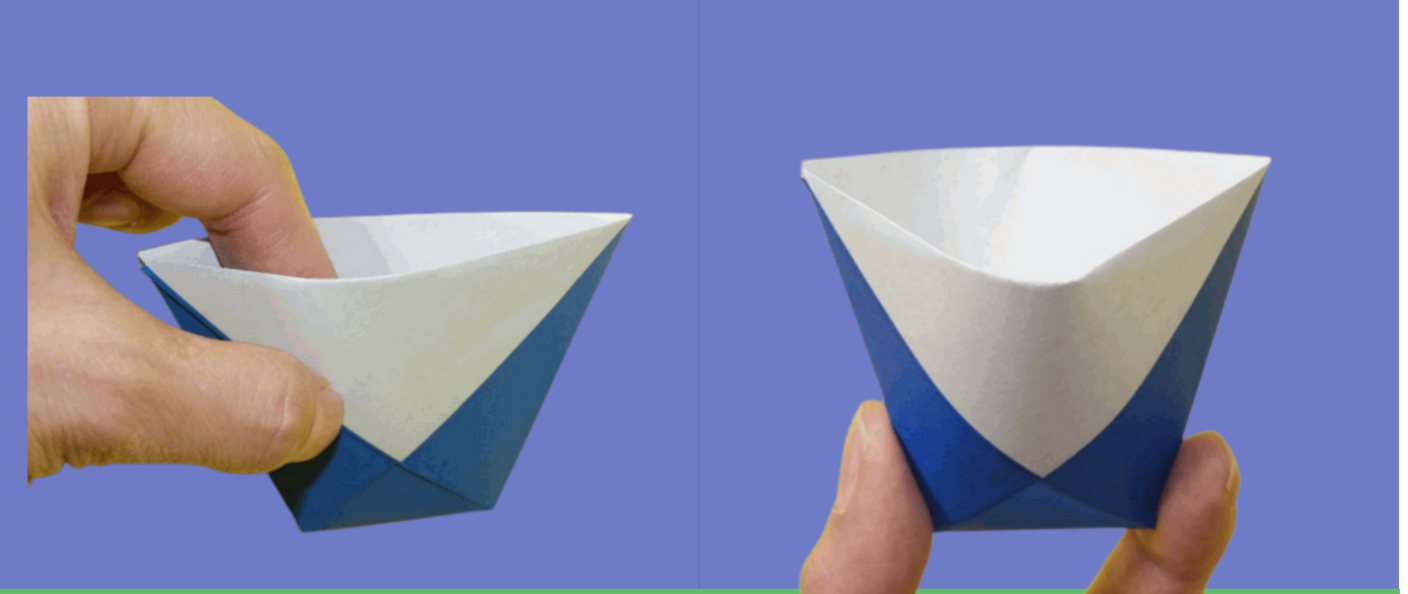
Art- Origami Bird

			
<p>Step 1: Start with a square piece of origami paper.</p>	<p>Step 2: Fold the paper in half by folding the top corner to the bottom corner. You should have an upside down triangle.</p>	<p>Step 3: Fold part of the top down so that the edge is about halfway down. Don't make this flap too thin because this will become the wings.</p>	<p>Step 4: Turn the paper over.</p>
			
<p>Step 5: Take the bottom corner of the top layer and fold it up like this.</p>	<p>Step 6: Fold the figure in half by folding the left side over to the right.</p>	<p>Step 7: Now fold that same flap back like this to make one of the wings.</p>	<p>Step 8: Fold the other wing back also.</p>
			
<p>Step 9: Push the centre of the head in and flatten. This is called an inside reverse fold.</p>			

Practicing Mindfulness-Next Steps



Art- Origami Cup

			
<p>Step 1: Start with a square piece of origami paper.</p>	<p>Step 2: Fold paper in half by folding the bottom corner to top corner.</p>	<p>Step 3: Fold the left edge of the triangle to the bottom edge, then unfold. We only need the crease line.</p>	
			
<p>Step 4: Fold the left corner of the triangle to the end of the crease line on the right.</p>		<p>Step 5: Fold the right corner to the left corner.</p>	<p>Step 6: Fold the top flap down.</p>
			
<p>Step 7: Turn the paper over.</p>	<p>Step 8 & 9: Again, fold the top flap down and turn back over again</p>	<p>Step 10: Open up the pocket.</p>	

Debrief: Origami, along with all the other art based mindfulness activities are there to demonstrate how to quiet our minds and focus on the minimal of things. Discuss with the group how taking part in the activities made them feel and if they see or feel any benefits from focusing their minds.

Practicing Mindfulness-Stepping It Up

The previous activities have been designed to explore the idea of what 'mindfulness' is and to demonstrate practical ways to focus ones self and concentrate the mind.

The next few activities will now look at how we can practice mindfulness on an individual level. As a facilitator your role will be to encourage your young people to be open minded and to try what is practiced in these activities.

Stepping It Up Activity

Body Scan

To run this activity all you need to find a quiet space, with plenty of room for your group to spread out. Paper and pencils for each participant or alternatively a pre-printed 'body outline image'.

Step 1: Ask the group to assume a comfortable position- probably best seated on the ground- and remain as still as possible.

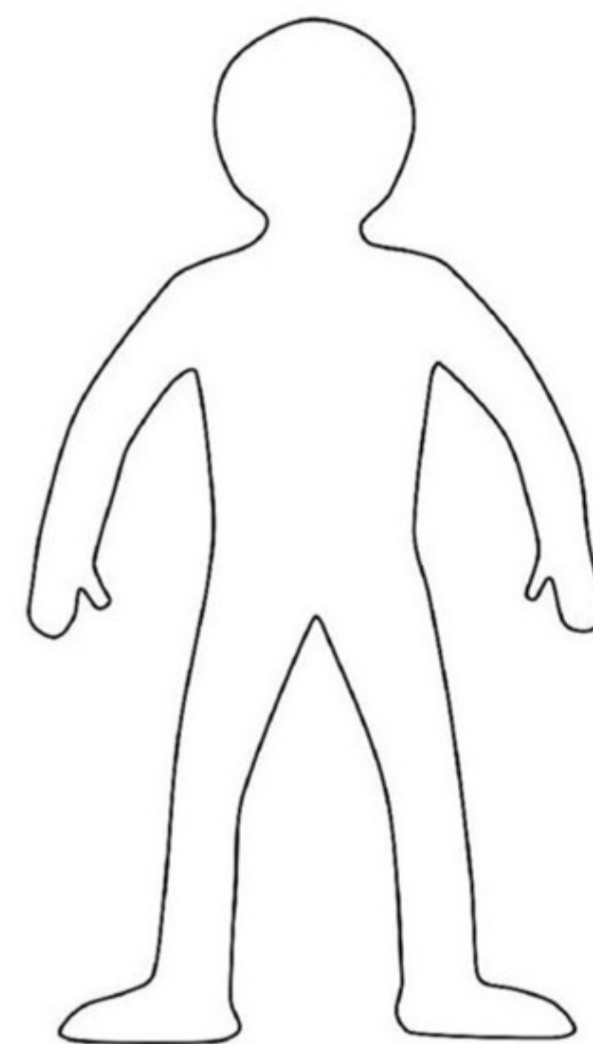
Step 2: Ask everyone to take a deep breath and focus their energy on one part of the body. Release the breath and start becoming observant.

Step 3: Ask everyone to think about what's happening. What do they feel on their skin? What do they hear inside of their body? What do they smell?

Step 4: Move onto a different body part until you've covered everything. As you do this, everyone should become more aware of how their body works, the sensations and feelings that they have, and much more.

Step 5: Complete the exercise by asking the group to record the feelings and sensations, the thoughts and the emotions they experienced in their 'body outlines'

Debrief: The purpose of this activity has been to encourage participants to think about how amazing their body is. It makes sounds and movements without you ever being aware of it, your eyes may dart about without you ever realising, your body noticing the smells and sounds about you whilst you barely register them. The body scan provides the chance to slow everything down around us in order to be acutely aware of everything.



Stepping It Up Activity- 5 Minutes of Gratitude

This activity is quick and easy to run, provide pen and paper and ask the group to spend 5 minutes to list 5 things that they are grateful for about their day. This exercise can be an effective way to ground the self. It's easy to forget that there are good things happening when you're struggling with stress and anxiety. Be as specific as possible, too, describing how these things that make you are grateful for make you feel.

Practicing Mindfulness-Stepping It Up

Stepping It Up Activity Heartbeats

To run this activity all you need is to find a quiet space, with plenty of room for your group to spread out.

Step 1: Ask everyone to jump up and down in place or do star jumps for one minute.

Step 2: Once the minute is up, sit the group down and ask them to put a hand over their heart. Instruct everyone to close their eyes and pay attention only to their heartbeat and breathing as well.

Step 3: Ask everyone to think about how they reacted to feeling their heartbeat. What ways did it make them feel. How in-tune are they with something that works so hard in their body?

Debrief: Paying attention to one's heartbeat has a role in many mindfulness exercises and activities as it enables us to focus on just one part of our body and open our minds to the sensations and feelings that occur every millisecond of our day. Being able to recognise how our bodies respond to the experiences and things around us enables us to better stop and pause and think things through before we react or respond to others or the situations we are facing.



Stepping It Up Activity Mix Tape

To run this activity you will need a smart-phone/ laptop, internet connection and a list of three songs from each participant.

Step 1: Ask everyone to choose 3 songs as follows- one that make them happy, one that calms them and one they feel a deep connection with.

Step 2: In order, play a snippet (about 2 mins) of each persons song across the three categories.

Step 3: For the next step be mindful that there will be those that won't want to share, so ask for volunteers to describe the music itself: what instruments did they hear? Is the song loud or soft? Fast or slow? How do they feel when they listen, both mentally and physically: what emotions does the song create in them? Where in your body do they feel them? Can they feel the beat of the music in their body?

Debrief: Music is a great way of grounding us and often causes us to focus and listen to our thoughts, feelings, and our movements. Using music as a tool to help calm us and to take us to a place we feel safe and able to put in perspective the world we are experiencing is all part of our 'mindful' journey and equips us with an easy 'go to' for when we are feeling overwhelmed.



Practicing Mindfulness-Concluding the Journey

All the activities within this resource act to prepare and demonstrate how we can take steps to quiet down the world around us, focus on our self, our thoughts, feelings and emotions and in general notice the environments around us- helping us make connections and focus to regulate how we engage with and experience our daily lives.

To conclude this journey, participants will be asked to complete the '**Walk to meet yourself**' activity.

Concluding the Journey A Walk to Meet Yourself.

To run this activity you will need to plan a trip to somewhere outdoors in nature, a woodland or meadow, a beach or low level hill area etc. Ensure you complete all appropriate Risk Assessments, collect consent forms and that your group wears suitable clothing and bring correct provisions.



The Walk to Meet Yourself provides an opportunity for the group to put into practice the range of technique that they have been developing to better connect with the environment around them and to recognise how these things impact upon us in terms of thoughts, feelings, emotions and sensations.

Step 1: Prepare your group for their journey, start the exercise by practicing 'mindful breathing' and calm the group down so that they are ready for the journey ahead.

Step 2: Explain that the group will complete a short walk, there will be opportunities to pause and stop along the way, with the intent of the journey being a chance to practice our mindfulness.

Step 3: Begin the journey, encouraging the group to be silent and to begin to notice the world around them. They should be looking to the flora and fauna, focusing on the colours, shapes and smells around them.

Step 4: Stop every so often to allow the group to 'mindful breath' and to connect with any one thing they notice. Emphasise that they should focus on the sensations and feelings that arise within

them and how this affects their thoughts and emotions. If possible find safe areas for the group to take off socks and shoes and to 'physically feel' the place they are at or to feel the wind in their faces.

Step 5: Conclude the journey by asking for the group to share their thoughts and feelings about the experience What things did they notice? What thoughts and emotions were brought up? Do they recognise the activity as a positive thing to do and help us when we are feeling overwhelmed or troubled by something, or if we just need to take a pause in our daily lives?

Ask the group for their thoughts about the over-all programme and if they will be adopting some of these techniques to use in the future.

Debrief: The aim of this activity has been to encourage the group to notice the world around them, the sounds and the smells, as well as the insects and the wildlife too. The group should pick up on the sensations they feel on their bodies from the elements and recognise the thoughts and feelings that are stirred within them. The activity helps us connect not only with the natural world, in seeing the beauty all around us, but with one another too, as we all share in the same experience.

Mindfulness - Programme/ Activity Log

Group Name:

Section:



Participant names and baseline

Base Line Start/ Finish	Base Line Start/ Finish	Base Line Start/ Finish
Base Line Start/ Finish	Base Line Start/ Finish	Base Line Start/ Finish
Base Line Start/ Finish	Base Line Start/ Finish	Base Line Start/ Finish
Base Line Start/ Finish	Base Line Start/ Finish	Base Line Start/ Finish
Base Line Start/ Finish	Base Line Start/ Finish	Base Line Start/ Finish

Session Number/ Date:

Attendance Nos:

Brief description of activity - how did the group respond?

Young Person Comment -



Session Number/ Date:

Attendance Nos:

Brief description of activity - how did the group respond?

Young Person Comment -

Mindfulness - Programme/ Activity Log



Session Number/ Date:

Attendance Nos:

Brief description of activity - how did the group respond?

Young Person Comment -

Session Number/ Date:

Attendance Nos:

Brief description of activity - how did the group respond?

Young Person Comment -

Session Number/ Date:

Attendance Nos:

Brief description of activity - how did the group respond?

Young Person Comment -

Mindfulness - Programme/ Activity Log



Session Number/ Date:

Attendance Nos:

Brief description of activity - how did the group respond?

Young Person Comment -

Session Number/ Date:

Attendance Nos:

Brief description of activity - how did the group respond?

Young Person Comment -

Plan, Do, Review

Comment on how the programme ran overall, and record things you may want to change next time you run it.